Sophie Hawkins, Lambi Fund of Haiti’s new Social Media Manager, conducted interviews, virtually and telephonically, with Lambi’s Executive Director, Marie Marthe Saint Cyr, and Haiti Director, Josette Perard, in April, 2014.

Even today, 20 years after Lambi’s founding, the world’s view of Haiti is entrenched in misconceptions. But as Marie Saint Cyr, Executive Director and Josette Perard, Haiti Director reflect on the Lambi Fund’s past 20 years of work, the image that emerges of Haiti is one of strength and power. “I think one of the biggest misconceptions is that we are in an irreversible level of poverty.” But as Marie reflects on what she has seen and experienced on the ground in Haiti, she notes that, “Haiti is not a lost case, the people in Haiti are willing to invest in change. The people in Haiti are not giving up.”

MSC: I think that many question whether or not the poor are able, but having lived and survived in Haiti, I have seen a level of capacity that is very often unacknowledged. The people in each locality know their locality and its needs because they have been strategizing how to survive for years, long before Lambi Fund was founded. There is a cross-learning that goes on at Lambi Fund. I am learning how they live, how they make decisions – because they live in the locality – they know. The people in these rural communities use their own history to create and build their own system.

JP: It is because Lambi believes in the ability of the members of the organizations, that they are in charge of their own lives. They are the agents of their own development and the development of their communities.

I have seen a level of capacity that is very often unacknowledged.

Dry, barren land in Haiti

Deforestation not only depletes the soil, but exacerbates conditions leading to drought. Says Jean Romain Beltinor, a farmer and father of six in Bombardopolis, "it is misery that makes us do it."

According to Josette Perard, Lambi Fund's Haiti Director, "the people of Haiti are strong, but right now, we are at the will of mother nature."
Putting Our Hands Together: *Lambi Fund's Next 20 Years*

*By Mark Schuller*

As all of you know, Haiti was devastated by an earthquake four years ago. This inspired a generosity the world has rarely – if ever – seen. Yet, news reports today are less than encouraging: Tens of thousands still live under tents; affordable housing is unavailable. A hard road lies ahead for reconstruction, with dwindling attention and aid dollars. But this ‘top-down’ story isn’t the only one to be told. For the last 14 years, I’ve been looking to the grassroots for inspiration.

Lambi Fund’s (Fon Lanbi) bottom-up approach has supported over 200 local development projects, defined by grassroots organizations. As a student and scholar of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), I am continually impressed and amazed at the level of sophistication, know-how, participation, and pride of Fon Lanbi’s partners. Unfortunately, top-down aid approaches have left inconsistent and disappointing material results and created a culture of hierarchy and dependency in Haiti. As a blan, [foreigner], I see too often the result of this well-meaning charity. It is hard to admit to good-hearted people outside Haiti, but increasingly NGOs are looked upon with suspicion.

Long before I joined the board, I recommended Fon Lanbi as a true alternative to top-down approaches. Now that I have had the opportunity to interact with people as a board member, I am even more determined to join the peasant associations in their struggle for development and justice.

But “Haiti Fatigue” has been on the rise. As international attention and aid fades, it becomes more important to have a real assessment of the impact of our efforts. The 20th anniversary is an opportunity to reflect both on where we’ve been and where we are going. I’ve been to Washington a few times since the earthquake to document the research in the camps. Because of the challenge of travel and obtaining visas, people selected to represent Haiti are too often well-meaning blan. The grassroots, and the stubbornly vital peasant movement who have been engaged in a quiet revolution, are not invited to speak on their own behalf.

To ensure the next 20 years of Fon Lanbi, please consider giving sustainably. If 1000 people offer a monthly contribution, however big or small, this offers the stability that groups like the Organization of Young People in Gros Morne can count on.

We will still be asked to amplify their voice. In addition to our donations we are also citizens of particular countries. Mine, the United States, has and will continue to play a major role in affairs in Haiti. While our donations are important, our role as citizens is arguably more important in the long run.

We hope you will join us in acting. We look forward to working with you, deepening your relationship, to commemorate Haiti’s 20 years by doing what you can to address head on the challenges Lambi Fund faces now and the 20 years beyond.

*An mèt men nou ansann. Let’s put our hands together for the next 20 years.*
Give water, Give life: 20 Cisterns for 20 years

Here, in the United States, when thirsty, we simply walk to our sink or to a water fountain and there it is: life-giving water. We don’t think twice about how lucky we are to have easy access to clean and safe water. But imagine, if only for a moment, a place where water is not as accessible:

Mesie carrying water

Mesie lives in Nord Ouest, the northwest of Haiti, a region where drought is common. At 10 years, Mesie is the one who fetches water for her family each day. The last four months have been plagued by drought. Every day, Mesie must walk six hours to fetch one pail of water.

It does not matter when Mesie starts her six-hour journey to get water: she will not return in time to attend school, she will not get to play and be a child. The heavy burden of fetching water and assisting the women in the field falls upon the girls of Haiti’s rural villages. Forced to live in unsanitary conditions, with frequent food shortages, and little clean water, they live a life postponed.

They live a life postponed.

Four years ago, in the wake of the earthquake and the great support we received from people like you, the Lambi Fund of Haiti constructed 14 rainwater cisterns in Northwest Haiti. Young girls like Mesie were able to go to school, often for the first time. But today, at this very moment, Haiti is in the midst of a water crisis. Dry seasons in Haiti, particularly in the north, are longer, the rainy seasons shorter, and frequently more intense. These extreme droughts in the region have lead to dry cisterns, miniscule harvests, and the increasing threat of cholera. With no meaningful rain in Nord Ouest since August 2013, many of the cisterns we built in 2010 now run dry before the rains come again.

So, Tet Kole (Heads Together), the organization with which we worked to bring water to the Northwest, has asked us for 20 more cisterns. But, since the earthquake, the price of concrete has risen and cisterns that once cost $1,500, now cost $4,500. The cost may seem high, but the gift of a cistern is not simply a gift of water, it is a gift of life.

When girls like Mesie have to travel long distances to collect water, they miss out on numerous opportunities to learn and grow. Instead of spending hours walking to a faraway water source, women can spend more time on sustainable activities; girls can attend school when a potable water source is located in their community. Haiti is not looking for a hand out;

Haiti is not looking for a hand out; it is looking for a hand up.

it is looking for a hand up. Haitians are resourceful; they are strong. It is the villagers themselves who will gather and lay the rocks that will form the bed beneath which the cisterns will be built. They will provide the labor that will build the cisterns. They will each contribute 4.5 Haitian Gourde ($0.10) a month for the care and maintenance of these life-giving cisterns.

And Lambi Fund does not simply provide the monetary assistance and then leave. In addition to helping with water access, Lambi Fund provides training to community members both about project management as well as about ways water quality affects health with specific training on hygiene and water techniques. Trainings are...many of the cisterns...built in 2010 now run dry before the rains come again.

Continued Page 5
A Roundtable Discussion with Marie and Josette (cont.)

Continued from Page 1

This model of supporting grassroots organizations and working towards larger goals from the ground up has proved successful in Haiti. Why do you think other organizations/non-profits are not using this model? What are the challenges to this ground up sort-of approach?

MSC: The big challenge is relinquishing the sense of power in a partnership – to put the other on equal footing. We have to be sure that we are not trying to impose something that doesn’t make sense. When we strengthen capacity, when we build a partnership that evolves over time, when we build an activity that is locally identified, supported, and implemented, then we build something that is sustainable over the next generation. Really it is about valuing the partnership with the people.

JP: Other NGOs have their own ways of doing things, their own philosophies and methodology. At Lambi, we believe in engaging the participating organization in the entire process. It is in creating dialogue and understanding that we develop activities based on the needs community members identified. It is the people who work on the implementation of the activities. Lambi believes in their ability to manage their own development. By following the lead of the people who develop the activities themselves, we empower them to manage their own work.

While the Lambi Fund is all about strengthening grassroots democracy in Haiti, it has a U.S. domestic component as well. Describe that work. How has the domestic component of Lambi Fund changed over the years? How do you see it changing in the years ahead?

MSC: Lambi Fund was born out of the concerns of Haitian advocates in partnership with American activists. It was created in the United States by members in the diaspora whose migration arose explicitly from their efforts to promote human and civil rights in Haiti. The creation of the Lambi Fund is an act of advocacy. Our work is to garner support to succor the needs of those still fighting locally. It is an evolving work in education, collaboration and growth. I foresee an intensified advocacy process to address policies that, in fact, have had a regressive impact on democracy despite the creation of elections.

As I was growing up, Haiti was moving out of the Duvalier era into an era where strong strides towards democracy were being made. How do you think the world’s perception of Haiti has changed between 1994 and now?

MSC: The representation of Haiti across the world is the representation of the capital, Port au Prince. But much of the population lives outside the Port au Prince region; they continue with minimal support to create strategies for their own survival. Continued on Page 6
Give water, Give life: 20 Cisterns for 20 years (cont.)

Continued from Page 3

facilitated by Lambi’s Haiti staff with expertise on the subject. Workshop participants learn about rainwater harvesting, proper maintenance of the cisterns, the health benefits of clean water, and about gender issues as they relate to access to water.

Since 1994, the Lambi Fund has been helping the people of rural Haiti obtain the resources they need to build strong and sustainable community systems. And, in the past 20 years, Lambi Fund has managed to reach more the two million Haitians with its projects. This summer, the Lambi Fund will be launching a new campaign called: “Give Water, Give Life.” With your support, we intend to build 20 cisterns to honor our past 20 years of work, and help the people of Northwest Haiti combat climate change.

Keep Mesie and the people of rural Haiti in your mind and heart the next time you reach for your faucet, and spread the word about how by giving water, you can give the gift of life through the Lambi Fund’s: “Give Water, Give Life” Campaign.

Comings and Goings

It is with a heavy heart that the Lambi Fund must say goodbye to two of its wonderful staff: Kate Dill and Sarah Leavitt. And, while Lambi Fund employees may move on to do other things, they never stop working for the greater good.

Kate Dill
Kate was so moved by the amazing work of Lambi Fund’s partners in the field that she began to feel the tug to do the same in her own community. Last fall, Kate left Lambi Fund to support the efforts of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, where she is collecting data for the grant proposal writing and reporting processes. By interviewing formerly homeless individuals and collaborating with local health care facilities and emergency shelters, the Coalition hopes to demonstrate that a housed individual not only has greater opportunities for economic stability, social engagement and healthy living, but also presents lower costs to the greater community.

Sarah Leavitt
After six wonderful years with the Lambi Fund of Haiti, Sarah left the organization to pursue new opportunities. She is currently traveling and volunteering throughout South America and determining how to best play a role in economic justice and sustainable development.

[I] was so moved by the amazing work of Lambi Fund’s partners in the field that [I] began to feel the tug to do the same in [my] own community.
A Roundtable Discussion with Marie and Josette (cont.)

Continued from Page 4

If you look at the history of the physical environment, you see that the government is giving away thousands of acres for purposes that are not for the public good. Port au Prince does not represent Haiti. If you look at the rest of Haiti, you see a people who are strong, people who are focused on surviving, who have a local wisdom that we fail to explore. This local wisdom we explore with the Lambi Fund every day.

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JP: There are many people who do not have a positive impression of Haiti since Duvalier left. They don’t agree with what is happening. These people and institutions have their own agenda for Haiti, and the Haitian people represent an obstacle to their plans. However, within Lambi, we find that there are many positive changes. Just look at the issue of the Kreyol language, now on par with the French language as one of two official languages of Haiti. This promotes inclusion of rural Haitians who don’t speak French. Now rural people can say whatever they think about what is going on in Haiti. It allows people to mobilize to demand their rights as full citizens of the country.

You grew up in Haiti and still clearly have very strong connections to Haiti today. What are the biggest problems Haiti faces today?

MSC: A powerful infrastructure is the basis for development, communication, growth, and education. But infrastructure is lacking tremendously in Haiti. We had to witness 206,000 people die in the earthquake because a great portion of the Haitian population has to travel to Port Au Prince every single day for work. What Haiti needs is decentralization of services and work across the country. If you create a state and a system of leadership that is responsible, then you can easily address the struggles of the rural areas, rather than transporting people to the urban areas.

Is there a project that Lambi has funded during your time here that you feel especially connected to?

MSC: Yes! The Organization of Young People in Gros Morne. The first time I visited, they didn’t have a banner, but in the dirt they had perfectly, evenly arranged in white sand: “Welcome Lambi Fund”. I was actually in tears. Lambi had a partnership to create a mill and once the mill was up and running, the activities started reproducing. Without consulting with Lambi they started a second mill. This was not in the contract but this was a beautiful thing. These people were investing in their own community. As a result of all of the grain being processed, a burgeoning market began to flourish around the mills. I am still fascinated by the level of their work.

In the United States, when we think of democracy, we think of elections. How does Lambi Fund’s vision for democracy differ from that commonly held in the United States – the democracy that is frequently exported by the United States?

MSC: The United States has developed a democracy where you have systems in place, different levels of government. Elections provide a voice to the people. We’re not there yet in Haiti. Democracy in Haiti has to come from within and it has to come from the bottom up. You can’t tell people how important the election process is when they have no voice in the real government. My sense is that if you build knowledge and awareness of rights, and you build next to it an economy and a sense of independence, then you begin to create a participative arena in which democracy can grow.

Continued on Page 7
I want to make a difference for a rural Haitian community!

☐ Check enclosed for $ ___________________
   (make check payable to the Lambi Fund of Haiti)

☐ I would like to make this donation on a monthly basis.

☐ I would like information on how to include the Lambi Fund in my estate plans.

☐ Please charge my (circle one) for $ ___________
   Mastercard     Visa     AmEx

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Name: ______________________________________
Address: ____________________________________
City, State, Zip: _____________________________
E-mail address: _______________________________
Phone: ____________________________

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Card number ___________________ Exp. Date ___________
Signature ________________________ Today’s Date ___________

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For more information about the Lambi Fund of Haiti or to make an online donation, go to www.lambifund.org

Return to: Lambi Fund of Haiti, 1050 Connecticut Ave. NW, 10th Floor
Washington DC 20036   Or email us at info@lambifund.org

A Roundtable Discussion with Marie and Josette (cont.)

Continued from Page 6

JP: Although elections are one avenue to democracy, at Lambi we do not believe it is everything. We believe democracy is more. Democracy is the struggle of the people – of all the people - to mobilize and to assert their rights – the right to participate in all that is happening in Haiti.

Even after all the progress Haiti has made since 1804, many people still have misconceptions about the country. If there was one misconception of Haiti that you could clear up, what would that be?

MSC: There are many misconceptions. One of the biggest is that our level of poverty is irreversible. That Haiti is so poverty-stricken that it is at a point of no return. But I must say from what I have seen, and from the people that I have worked with, Haiti is not a lost cause. The people of Haiti are willing to invest in change and the people of Haiti are not giving up. They simply need true partners.

Do you see the direction of Lambi Fund changing in the next 20 years?

MSC: I think that we are in an extremely dynamic time. Neither Lambi nor any other organization can be static, you must be dynamic. I see Lambi evolving more to create messages so that the world can see Haiti in a different light. I see expanding the type of partnership we have on the ground. But I think that Lambi does not stand alone. For 20 years there have been so many people who have been extremely supportive of Lambi, it beckons us to ask them to stand with us. The success of the Lambi Fund - of rural Haiti - rests in our hands – yours and mine –we must accept that we live in one world. It is the responsibility of everyone in the diaspora – but it is the responsibility of other [American] partners as well.

JP: If there was an effective government, institutions and NGOs like Lambi would not exist in Haiti. The path we must follow is to empower member organizations to take things into their own hands and make change happen.

"The path we must follow is to empower member organizations to take things into their own hands and make change happen."
**Comings and Goings**

**Stephen Reichard – Deputy Director**
Stephen joined Lambi Fund in March after many years as a monthly sustainer. He was moved to support Lambi upon the encouragement of Julie Meyer, a friend, mentor and one of Lambi’s original founders. He brings some 30 years’ experience in the not-for-profit world to his work for the Lambi Fund including time in the solidarity movement in the 1980s, with the NGOs CARE and ACCION International, with Planned Parenthood, and many years working in Indian Country here in the United States.

**Sophie Hawkins – Social Media Manager**
Sophie, a graduate of the University of Maryland School of Communication, specializes in marketing and social media management. She recently moved to Portland, OR from Washington, DC. Sophie also works for SPOON Foundation, a non-profit with a focus on orphan nutrition around the world. Before coming to work for Lambi Fund, Sophie was a Marketing Assistant for the historic National Theatre.

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**Mission Statement**
The Lambi Fund’s mission is to assist the popular, democratic movement in Haiti. Lambi Fund provides financial resources, training and technical assistance to peasant-led community organizations that promote the social and economic empowerment of the Haitian people.

**Newsletter Update**
To reduce costs to the organization and the environment, with this issue, we will be limiting the number of individuals who receive the newsletter. This issue of the newsletter, and all past issues of the newsletter, remain available on the website. Look for formatting changes this fall, as well.

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